

REMARKS

By the present amendment, claim 3 has been amended to recite that the birefringent material shows liquid crystalline properties, claims 6 and 8 have been amended to replace “the Δn_1 direction” by “a direction of an axis showing a maximum refractive index difference between the birefringent material forming the minute domain and the translucent water-soluble resin” and “the Δn_2 direction” has been replaced by “a direction perpendicular to the direction of an axis showing a maximum refractive index difference between the birefringent material forming the minute domain and the translucent water-soluble resin,” and claim 9 has been amended to replace “an” by “the” before “iodine light absorbing material.”

Also, claim 13 has been amended to delete the dependence on claim 12, and new claim 14 corresponding to claim 13 but dependent on claim 12 has been added.

Claims 1-14 are pending in this application. Independent claim 1, and claims 2-10 dependent thereon, are directed to a polarizer. Claims 11-14 are directed to a polarizing plate, an optical film, and an image display, respectively, and are dependent on claim 1, claims 1 or 11, claims 1 or 11, and claim 12, respectively.

In the Office Action, the claims are objected to. It is alleged in the Office Action that, in claim 3, “shows liquid crystalline” is incomplete, in claims 6 and 8, “the Δn_1 direction” and “the Δn_2 direction” lacks antecedent basis, and in claim 9, “an iodine light absorbing material” does not refer to the antecedent of claim 1.

Claim 3 has been amended by reciting “properties” after “shows liquid crystalline,” as suggested in the Office Action.

Claims 6 and 8 have been amended to replace “the Δn_1 direction” by “a direction of an axis showing a maximum refractive index difference between the birefringent material forming the minute domain and the translucent water-soluble resin” and “the Δn_2 direction” has been replaced by “a direction perpendicular to the direction of an axis showing a maximum refractive index difference between the birefringent material forming the minute domain and the translucent water-soluble resin,” to provide antecedent basis.

Claim 9 has been amended to replace “an” by “the” before “iodine light absorbing material” to refer to the material of claim 1, as suggested in the Office Action.

In view of the above, it is submitted that the objections should be withdrawn.

Next, in the Office Action, claims 1-9 and 11-13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by WO 01/55753A (“Ito”), and claim 10 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Ito. In the Office Action, reference is made to the English translation of Ito in US 2003/0137633A1.

The rejection is respectfully traversed. Ito discloses a light-scattering polarizing film (12) including an isotropic continuous phase (13) and an optically anisotropic discontinuous phase (14) (see Ito at para. [0036]). This light-scattering polarizing film (12) can be used with a conventional light-absorbing polarizing element (24) (see Ito at para. [0041]-[0042] and Fig. 3).

The light-scattering polarizing film (12) of Ito is described in paragraphs [0120]-[0144] of Ito. This light-scattering polarizing film does not include iodine absorbing materials.

The light-absorbing polarizing element (24) of Ito is described at paragraphs [0145]-[0150] of Ito. This conventional polarizer (24) does not include a discontinuous phase.

In particular, contrary to the assertion in the Office Action (see Office Action at page 3, end of the first full paragraph), Ito at paragraphs [0066] and [0146]-[0150] is completely silent as to its continuous phase (13) being formed of a resin including an iodine light absorbing material. Specifically, paragraph [0066] of Ito mentions polyvinyl alcohol as an option for the isotropic phase (13) but is silent as to an iodine material. Further, paragraphs [0146]-[0150] discuss materials for the light-absorbing polarizing element (24), not the light-scattering film, as is clear from the title of this section of Ito (see Ito at para. [0145]).

With respect to claim 6, contrary to the assertion in the Office Action (see Office Action at page 3, last paragraph), Ito at paragraphs [0073]-[0074] is completely silent as to the orientation of the absorption axis of the iodine light absorbing material. Namely, these paragraphs of Ito discuss the birefringence of the discontinuous phase (14), not the continuous phase, as is clear from the title of that section of Ito (see Ito at para. [0071]).

With respect to claim 7, contrary to the assertion in the Office Action (see Office Action at page 4, first paragraph), Ito at paragraphs [0146]-[0150] is completely silent as to stretching the scattering film. Namely, these paragraphs relate to the conventional absorbing polarizer (24), not the scattering film (12), as discussed above. It is noted that Ito does disclose a stretching step

Amendment under 37 C.F.R. 1.111

Serial No. 10/681,384

Attorney Docket No. 032009

for the scattering film (12) but the objective is to obtain birefringence of the discontinuous phase, not to orient the matrix (see Ito at paras. [0070] and [0124]).

With respect to the other dependent claims, Ito also is completely silent as to the combinations of features recited in these respective claims.

In contrast, in the presently claimed invention, the polarizer comprises a film having a structure having a minute domain dispersed in a matrix formed of a translucent water-soluble resin including an iodine light absorbing material, as recited in present claim 1. This feature of the presently claimed invention and its advantages are not taught or suggested in Ito, because the isotropic continuous phase (13) of the scattering film (12) in Ito does not need to include an iodine light absorbing material, since the function of an absorbing polarizer is performed by the conventional film (24) of Ito. Accordingly, the present claims are not obvious over Ito.

In view of the above, it is submitted that the rejection should be withdrawn.

In conclusion, the invention as presently claimed is patentable. It is believed that the claims are in allowable condition and a notice to that effect is earnestly requested.

In the event there is, in the Examiner's opinion, any outstanding issue and such issue may be resolved by means of a telephone interview, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

Amendment under 37 C.F.R. 1.111
Serial No. 10/681,384
Attorney Docket No. 032009

In the event this paper is not considered to be timely filed, the Applicants hereby petition
for an appropriate extension of the response period. Please charge the fee for such extension and
any other fees which may be required to our Deposit Account No. 50-2866.

Respectfully submitted,

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